



Background:

At Mudslinger Customs, we focus on thorough inspections and diagnostics. We go deeper than most shops by looking at everything, including suspension and components that often get overlooked. It's about providing a trustworthy service and ensuring our customers have a clear understanding of their vehicle needs.

The business started out of necessity in my front yard. I couldn't afford to take my vehicles to a mechanic, so I had to learn how to do the repairs myself. I used every resource I could—service manuals from the parts store and YouTube, which was growing at the time.

It really started when another shop mishandled a repair on my vehicle. My dad dropped the car off, and the shop failed to advise us properly on the repairs needed. What started as an estimate of \$3,000 ended with a bill of over \$7,000. There was no clear communication, and I realized that I needed to take matters into my own hands. I couldn't afford to rely on shops like that anymore.

Throughout high school, I started working on friends' cars. Many of them didn't trust shops, and I saw firsthand how some shops treated women unfairly, assuming they didn't know anything

about vehicles. That became a core value for me—to educate every customer who walks through our doors. Knowledge is power, and I want my customers to feel empowered about their vehicles and the work we do.

As for the timeline, I officially purchased the business name on October 31, 2018. We started out part-time, working from my driveway and yard, until we went brick-and-mortar on November 21, 2021. We officially went full-time on February 21, 2022.

Solution:

We've grown significantly, not necessarily in revenue yet, but in knowledge and understanding of how to run the business. I come from a mechanical background, so business concepts like financials, profit and loss, and gross margins were not my strengths. Before working with Business Growth and Acceleration Program (BizGap), I ran the business day-to-day without a structured plan. It was more like, "Okay, this bill needs to be paid, let's get a job done to cover it." The BizGap project in FL-27 is funded by a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Focused on providing hyperlocal consulting, training and outreach to small businesses in targeted communities and commercial corridors.

Since working with Business Consultant Adriana Madrinan, who helps in Marketing and Growth Strategies, we've created a business plan, which has been a game-changer. She also taught us how to set up a website, use Excel sheets for marketing, manage bills, and stay organized. Having a structured plan has given us clarity and direction, and it's made a huge difference in how we operate and can focus on growing the business.

From the Owner:

Don't lose hope, and don't think you have to do everything on your own. When I first started, I thought I had to be the mechanic, the janitor, the receptionist, and the accountant all at once. That mindset only holds you back. To grow, you need a team. You must delegate responsibilities and trust others to help you.

For example, I rely on Adriana's guidance for business planning and finances. That allows me to focus on the work I'm best at—mechanics. Without delegation, I was stuck in business every day with no time to step back and plan. You need to empower your team and give them the tools to succeed so you can focus on growing the business.

Business Owner Name: Jon Mielke
Company Name: Mudslingers Customs
Location: Cutler Bay, FL